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JEROME DUCOTE
He said growers hired him

Burglar Tells Who Backed UFW Thefts

By Rick Carroll

A burglar's 96-page statement on file at San Jose Municipal Court claims that at least two major California grape growers conspiratorially backed break-ins and thefts of documents at United Farm Workers Unionheadquarters in the 1960's.

The allegations were made by Jerome Ducote, a former sheriff's deputy and Republican Party activist, who was arraigned yesterday in San Joseon more than a score of felony charges and held on $100,000 bail.

Cesar Chavez, head of the UFW, said yesterday that one allegedly grower-inspired burglary of UFW headquarters in Delano in 1967 set back the national grape boycott by six months.

At the same time, UFW general counsel Jerry Cohen said anwas effort made in 1974 to sell back to the union, for $25,000, some of the documents stolen at Delano.

Ducote, 46, a former Santa Clara county deputy sheriff, has admitted to state investigators that he committed 17 political burglaries in 1966 and 1967.

He is charged with 21 felonies and is being held in the Santa Clara county jail in lieu of $100,000 bail.

Municipal Court is a 96-page admission made by Ducote in which he alleges that various grape growers or grower representatives hired him to gather evidence indicating Chavez had Communist connections.

"Unbelievable!" Chavez exclaimed when informed of Ducote's admissions.

The UFW leader said he

Back Page Col. 5

From Page 1

never suspected that the growers might be behind two burglaries of the union's Delano offices and also a burglary at his home near Delano.

On the contrary, Chavez said, he had always thought the burglaries were the work of the House un-American Activities Committee.

Chavez, reached at a UFW headquarters at Keene, southeast of Bakersfield, said the 1967 raids on the Delano headquarters resulted in the loss of grape boycott plans, financial records, lists of financial contributors and the names and addresses of UFW members.

"It gave us an awful bad time for six months thereafter. We didn't know where we were. It stalled the boycott and strike. It took us six months to recover," Chavez said.

In his 96-page statement to state special agent Walter Kubas, Ducote outlined in detail how the UFW burglaries in Delano were arranged.

He said that he (Ducote) and Kenneth Wilhelm and Stephen D'Arrigo went to Fresno in March, 1967 and held a meeting at the Del Webb Towne House with Jack Pandol.

Pandol, a Delano grape grower and member of the state Board of Agriculture, was at that time state secretary-treasurer of the California Right to Work Committee.

"I had nothing to do with any illegal transactions," he said yesterday. "I would like to say that he (Ducote) is full of——.

Pandol said he gave Ducote money because he was posing as an FBI agent, a Catholic priest and an agent of the HUAC committee. "He claimed he knew who burned down our water tank," Pandol said.

Andy Gulermovich of Salinas, an agent for the California Insurance Commission who was named by Ducote as his "wheelman" on the Chavez break-in, said "I thought I was there to do surveillance. There's a degree of

Wilhelm, was then secretary of the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau while D'Arrigo was a Salinas area farmer.

The meeting in Fresno, Ducote said, occurred after he and others had burglarized the San Jose Peace Center, the Santa Clara home of Grace McDonald, then editor of a farm labor newspaper, and Ramparts Magazine.

Ducote said information bearing on Chavez taken in those burglaries was shown to Pandol, and D'Arrigo "made a pitch for financial assistance because he had been "carrying the burden" and paying for the burglars and their expenses.

A few days later, when they were back in San Jose, Ducote said, D'Arrigo called him and said Pandol had called and requested a break-in of the Chavez headquarters on a dirt road on the outskirts of Delano.

Four nights later, Ducote said, he and Henry Scherling went to Delano, burglarized the headquarters and took away the files.

The license of their rented auto was reported to police and Scherling eventually surrendered to San Jose police. The investigation was dropped, according to Ducote, after Ducote explained to the Delano police that the object of the burglary was to obtain pro-Communist evidence against Chavez.

Wilhelm has said he hired Ducote for some investigative work but denied this involved political burglaries. Ducote, he said, is "a liar" and "a constitutional psychopath."

D'Arrigo also denied any knowledge of political burglaries, when questioned by investigators, and said Ducote is "a con man" who has tried to work various schemes on Salinas Valley farmers.

Cohen, the UFW general counsel, said that during the winter of 1974 he received a mysterious call from a man who wanted to meet him in the bar of the Hilton Hotel in Bakersfield.

He said he met a man, whom he now thinks may have been Ducote, who offered to sell him union documents for $25,000. Cohen said the man showed him documents signed both by Chavez and one of his assistants, Dolores Huerta.

Cohen said there was a second meeting with the same man at the Ramada Inn coffee shop in Bakersfield. This meeting, Cohen said, was observed by FBI Agent Conrad Shaw, whom Cohen had alerted.

Cohen said he refused to buy the documents and that nothing apparently came of the FBI's involvement in the case.

The 96-page Ducote statement also describes how Ducote burglarized the Carmel home of social reformer Saul Alinsky in 1967 and took a key to Alinsky's Chicago office and a briefcase of material on Chavez.

After that, Ducote said, he met Harold Anglers, head of the California Grape and Tree Fruit League.

"He agreed to raise money from the farmers in the state to finance a break-in of Alinsky's office in Chicago," Ducote told Agent Kubas.

Ducote said he and Scherling, posing as building employees, spent three hours "pulling files" in Alinsky's Chicago office and flew back to San Jose and delivered the material to Wilhelm.

Delano police chief Jim [illegible] was unavailable for comment. [illegible] was Scherling. And Stephen D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Bros. [illegible] Salinas referred all inquiries to his attorneys.